

**New Jersey's
Plan for
Higher Education:
1999 Update**

***New Jersey
Commission on
Higher Education***

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FOREWORD

There are significant challenges facing higher education as it plans for the future, including such things as:

- Increasing competition for limited public resources among various state priorities and obligations;
- Growing public expectations for accountability, productivity, and cost containment;
- The changing mix of students and student needs driven by shifting demographics;
- Rapidly changing technology and the global environment;
- The labor market's growing demand for worker flexibility and new job-specific skills; and
- The competition from new providers of postsecondary education.

Individual institutions, the system, and the state must be architects of change to deal with these new realities, and change often requires bold steps.

This first update of *Looking to the New Millennium: New Jersey's Plan for Higher Education* reaffirms the plan's vision and moves beyond the original principles and policy recommendations, defining a course for our colleges and universities to achieve their aspirations for excellence. Considerable progress has been made since 1996 in addressing critical state issues and the basic conditions to support the vision for higher education. Yet the system's aspirations of being among the best in the world demand more deliberate planning and bold action.

This updated long-range plan calls upon New Jersey and its institutions to address the issue of mission differentiation directly, focusing energy and resources on specific areas of strength to develop academic and research programs that are highly regarded in New Jersey and beyond. The update also places a renewed emphasis on advocacy for higher education, recommending the development of the broad constituency and support needed to make New Jersey's vision for higher education a reality.

This first update of New Jersey's Plan for Higher Education reaffirms the plan's vision and moves beyond the original principles and policy recommendations, defining a course for our colleges and universities to achieve their aspirations for excellence.

NEW JERSEY'S VISION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

New Jersey's system of higher education aspires to be among the best in the world, embracing excellence, access, and affordability. The quality of the state's public and independent colleges and universities will serve as a magnet to attract both resident and nonresident students and highly qualified faculty. Institutions will model tolerance and civility, celebrating the diversity that creates rich learning environments. A major force in developing the full potential of New Jersey and its people, higher education will serve all residents who have the interest and potential to learn, regardless of their economic circumstances.

The state's higher education system will develop and nurture the citizens and leaders of the future, preparing individuals for fulfilling lives, rewarding careers, and lifelong learning. Technology will strengthen the system and improve access, efficiency, and program effectiveness into the 21st century and beyond. Through teaching, research, and public service, colleges and universities will support the state's public policy goals of economic growth, social stability, and enhanced quality of life. New Jersey will value and support its investment in higher education, and institutions will seek innovative, collaborative approaches to meet the challenges ahead, committed to serving a globally competitive society.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENCE

Any outstanding system of higher education is guided by characteristics of excellence to which the system and member institutions continuously aspire. Such a system:

- ◆ Recognizes that the fundamental purpose of higher education is to better humankind — morally, intellectually, physically, and materially — and to educate leaders for a diverse and complex society;
- ◆ Places teaching and learning at the core of its mission, preparing individuals for fulfilling lives, rewarding careers, and lifelong learning;
- ◆ Conducts both basic and applied research to enhance teaching and learning, increase knowledge, and improve the quality of life at the local, state, national, and international levels;
- ◆ Embraces academic freedom, employing and supporting faculty of the highest quality who seek and transmit knowledge, free of inappropriate influence from institutions, church, state, or special interests;
- ◆ Consists of institutions with clearly differentiated missions that provide excellent and diverse opportunities to meet the needs of students, the state, and society;

- ◆ Provides an array of higher education programs;
- ◆ Permits a smooth transition between institutions;
- ◆ Provides coordination within the context of a statewide plan;
- ◆ Utilizes resources responsibly and efficiently to support various types of institutions, acknowledging sectoral diversity and capitalizing on the advantages of collaboration, cooperation, and resource sharing;
- ◆ Provides financial assistance commensurate with financial need to enable access for all students who can benefit;
- ◆ Seeks to expand educational opportunity, particularly for those students who are from underserved populations;
- ◆ Uses and advances technology to enhance the communication of ideas and improve access and efficiency of program delivery;
- ◆ Advances the cultural richness of the higher education community and society as a whole;
- ◆ Collaborates with elementary and secondary education, business and industry, and other public and private entities to meet the educational needs of society efficiently and effectively;
- ◆ Engages in, enlists, and coordinates broad-based advocacy that communicates higher education's contributions to the state, demonstrating the benefits of long-term investments in higher education;
- ◆ Monitors its operations through continuous planning and evaluation, remaining open to change in a competitive and complex world; and
- ◆ Ensures an appropriate relationship between institutional autonomy and accountability.

New Jersey's system of higher education already reflects many of these characteristics and seeks to embrace and exemplify them fully in its continuing quest for excellence.

I. INTRODUCTION

In October 1996, the Commission on Higher Education adopted, with advice from the Presidents' Council and the broader higher education community, *Looking to the New Millennium: New Jersey's Plan for Higher Education*. The Commission called for a periodic review and update of the plan in order to allow for further development and refinement as needed. In February 1998, the Commission and the Presidents' Council established the Long-Range Plan Review Committee to undertake the first such review; this document includes their findings and recommendations.

As a first step, the committee reviewed the status of all of the recommendations in the plan. In order to determine progress in implementing the recommendations directed specifically toward colleges and universities, the committee conducted a survey of the institutions. Forty-nine of New Jersey's 56 colleges and universities responded, including all 31 public institutions, 13 of 14 independent institutions with a public mission, three degree-granting proprietary institutions, and two religious institutions. This report includes a summary of each of the plan's recommendations, as well as a status report on each and, in some cases, further recommendations. (New recommendations are boxed within the text for ease of identification.)

In an effort to better determine the requisites of excellence in higher education, the committee also sought information from various stakeholders (including students, parents, faculty, union representatives, government officials, business leaders, and others) regarding what they desire, expect, and need from colleges and universities. The requisites of excellence identified by stakeholders, for the most part, reaffirm the vision and characteristics of excellence laid out in the plan to guide New Jersey higher education. The responses also provided valuable insights that assisted the committee as it updated the plan.

The work of the joint Commission and Presidents' Council Restructuring Assessment Committee also provided valuable perceptions related to long-range planning. Both the results of the Higher Education Restructuring Assessment Questionnaire and the discussions from a statewide conference were considered in developing recommendations for the future.

II. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking to the New Millennium: New Jersey's Plan for Higher Education is the state's first long-range plan for higher education since 1981. The plan articulates the restructured higher education system's vision to be among the best in the world, embracing excellence, access, and affordability. It also identifies the essential conditions that will provide the foundation for achieving that vision. These include clearly focused and differentiated institutional missions, institutional and systemwide accountability, adequate and predictable state funding, a well-developed technology infrastructure, and coordinated advocacy. The plan also focuses on ways in which higher education can be more responsive to the needs of students and society and includes specific recommendations aimed at addressing six critical issues facing New Jersey that were identified in 1996 with the involvement of state, community, and business leaders:

- Efficient and effective use of resources
- Education and workforce training
- Economic growth
- Community and civic commitment
- The environment
- Health and health care

In the two and one-half years since adoption, many of the plan's recommendations have been fully or partially implemented. Examples of accomplishments related to critical state issues include:

- Completion of a higher education capacity study and initial efforts to address the recommendations in that study aimed at efficient and effective use of resources;
- Development of a broad-based transfer and articulation agreement and plans for a computerized system to facilitate student transfers;
- Increased external support for research at the public research universities;
- Enhanced formal programs to increase knowledge of diverse cultures during the past two years at close to half of the institutions;
- A one million dollar grant program implemented to improve graduation and transfer rates of low-income or minority students; and
- Enactment of legislation to facilitate state and local policy development, planning, and oversight in the area of adult literacy education;

Examples of accomplishments related to the essential conditions for achieving the vision include:

- A state commitment to provide a significant increase in operating aid for community colleges over four years to provide balance to the funding partnership;
- A state commitment to provide additional funding for facilities renewal and construction for community colleges and legislation, near enactment, to provide facilities funds for four-year institutions;
- Implementation of a performance funding program for public institutions; and
- A significant infusion of state money for technology infrastructure, which accelerated implementation of institutional technology plans and spurred systemwide collaboration to create the Virtual Academic Library Environment, the Virtual University, and an interinstitutional broadband network backbone.

Section III of the report provides a status update on all of the plan's recommendations. In many cases, the plan's institution-based recommendations are ongoing principles of good practice in which many or most of the institutions were already engaged. Efforts to adhere to those principles

priorities. Together, continued development of performance funding and annual accountability reports will help institutions and the system measure progress toward statewide goals and the shared vision. At the same time, individual institutions will set and pursue benchmarks related to their own missions and aspirations for excellence.

In still another basic area, student assistance, New Jersey continues to stand among the leading states in its commitment to need-based aid for full-time undergraduate students. An ongoing effort is necessary, however, to provide state assistance for the most economically disadvantaged part-time students as well.

There are two additional basic conditions identified in the plan as essential for achieving the vision: advocacy and institutional mission differentiation. While each of the plan's recommendations and the other basic conditions must be pursued, efforts in the area of advocacy and mission differentiation should be a primary focus of attention over the next decade in order to make higher education in New Jersey among the best available. Therefore, the two most far-reaching recommendations added to the plan are in these areas.

Advocacy: Advocacy for higher education played a major part in the implementation of many of the original plan's recommendations. The plan was effective in guiding institutional and state policy, planning, and resource allocation. The Commission, the Presidents' Council, and individual presidents articulated the importance of addressing priority needs. However, there is an ongoing need to better communicate higher education's fundamental value to society and the economic well being of the state. Increased awareness of that value is essential to developing the broader constituency and support necessary to maintain a high-quality system of higher education in the future.

This updated plan calls upon the Commission on Higher Education to address both advocacy and the quest for excellence. The Commission should develop and implement strategies to raise the level of awareness of the value of our colleges and universities and to make the case for investment in higher education based on institutional and systemwide data. It should also identify supplemental state funding strategies that will assist institutions in striving for excellence. The Commission should seek assistance and advice as necessary and should provide ongoing direction in implementing *New Jersey's Plan for Higher Education*. (Specific recommendation can be found on pages 31-32.)

Institutional Mission Differentiation: The state can and should dare to reach more energetically for excellence in higher education, but it must recognize that success will be determined by the degree to which individual institutions are among the best in what they do. In identifying requisites of excellence in higher education, stakeholders often cited the importance of a strong reputation in

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specific academic or research areas, which attracts high-achieving students and faculty. In today's global, competitive economy, however, institutions often have a tendency to expand missions and diversify, rather than to focus resources and energies to achieve excellence in targeted

III. STATUS REPORT AND NEW RECOMMENDATIONS

CRITICAL ISSUES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

CRITICAL ISSUE ONE: EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES

Capacity of the System

Original Recommendation: The Commission should examine the need for establishment, expansion, closure, or consolidation of institutions and study the size and structure of the New Jersey higher education system and its capacity to meet the needs of the state.

State Response: *The Commission reported to the Governor and Legislature in April 1998 regarding the capacity of the system and its ability to meet the needs of the state. The Commission determined that New Jersey's system of public and independent colleges and universities efficiently provides broad access to higher education. While it is not necessary to establish, close, or consolidate institutions, there are areas of unmet need in several regions of the state. Specifically, the northwest, southeast, and coastal regions of New Jersey have low access to degree programs and are projected to experience growth in college age population over the next several years.*

NEW RECOMMENDATION: Consistent with the findings of the capacity study, two- and four-year institutions should establish multi-institution centers to address the need for additional degree programs in underserved regions of the state. The centers should offer collaborative and joint degree programs, both on site and through distance learning. Partner institutions should be encouraged to develop proposals to meet this need and submit them to the Commission so consideration can be given to requesting funds to support start-up or expansion of such centers. The Commission and Presidents' Council should expedite any branch campus review processes necessary for the multi-institution centers.

Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics indicate that the number of high school graduates may increase by as many as 15,000 by 2008, bringing the total number of annual graduates to approximately 87,000. Assuming that current patterns regarding higher education attendance continue into the future, roughly 76% of those additional graduates, or 11,400 additional students, might enroll in college after graduation, with about 7,000 of those (62 %) remaining in state.

Additionally, the percentage of New Jersey jobs that require some form of higher education is expected to increase, and the desire for lifelong learning opportunities to enhance job skills and provide ongoing intellectual stimulation continues to grow. As a result, enrollments are likely to increase among both traditional and nontraditional students.

There are also higher education capacity issues that go beyond meeting enrollment demands. New Jersey is fortunate to have formidable human, geographical, commercial, and industrial assets it needs to compete in the new global, knowledge-based economy. Higher education's role in capitalizing on these assets requires institutional capacity to contribute to the generation and application of new knowledge.

NEW RECOMMENDATION: To ensure that the system is able to meet state needs into the future, the Commission should regularly monitor population projections and other indicators of need for increased capacity in higher education institutions. In addition, it should work with colleges and universities to determine institutional capacities and ensure that institutions will be able to absorb projected enrollment growth and to capitalize on state assets, providing intellectual capital in the form of ideas and the human resources needed to invent, produce, and exploit that capital.

Flexibility and Productivity

Original Recommendation: Based on an audit of major federal, state, and local regulations and laws that may be impediments to institutional flexibility, the Commission on Higher Education should identify changes that can improve institutional innovation and productivity while enhancing quality.

State Response: *The Commission made recommendations regarding employee relations issues, environment/health issues, student hospitalization insurance, construction inspections/reviews, federal student financial aid regulations, tuition waiver rules, workforce development reporting, and technology infrastructure. The Commission and Presidents' Council have addressed several of these recommendations, and work continues on others.*

Effective Delivery of Services

Original Recommendation: Every institution should strive for optimum use of time, facilities, and human resources. Institutional boards of trustees and administrations should continually reevaluate and, where necessary, restructure program offerings, administrative procedures, personnel procedures, and student services in order to enhance the quality of the institution in a cost-effective manner, promote student access and progress, and meet state needs.

State Response: *The Commission's capacity study found that a large number of degree and certificate programs had low enrollments, defined as 25 or fewer students at the undergradu-*

ate level and 10 or fewer students at the graduate level. In an effort to address this, the state's performance funding initiative rewards institutions that meet or move toward related benchmarks.

Institutional Response: A survey of institutions completed by the Commission in August 1998 indicates that many New Jersey colleges and universities reevaluate their program offerings, administrative procedures, personnel procedures, and student services on a regular basis. Slightly less than half of the institutions evaluate program offerings at least annually and slightly more than half do so every three to five years. Roughly half evaluate administrative and personnel procedures at least annually and another one-fourth do so every three to five years. Three-fourths of the institutions evaluate student services at least once a year.

Tuition Aid Grant (TAG) Distribution

Original Recommendation: Future funding and policy decisions regarding the TAG program should be informed by a task force that studied the overall funding structure of TAG, including award levels, the feasibility of extending TAG to part-time students, and the overall level of funding required for the program.

State Response: The task force recognized New Jersey's substantial commitment to need-based student aid and recommended that it maintain that commitment in order to preserve access and affordability. The task force concluded that the current structure of TAG serves well in meeting that commitment. It recommended exploring TAG for part-time students while stressing the need for additional funding to ensure that full-time student TAG awards are not affected by the new program. The Commission on Higher Education and Presidents' Council both included part-time TAG in their budget policy recommendations for the 1999 and 2000 fiscal years. The Student Assistance Board also supported the concept of part-time TAG, although it did not recommend funding for FY 2000.

(An additional recommendation related to student assistance appears on page 26.)

Transfer and Articulation

Original Recommendation: In striving for a seamless transition from associate to baccalaureate degree programs, the Presidents' Council should make recommendations to enhance articulation and transfer agreements and eliminate disincentives.

State Response: The Presidents' Council adopted transfer and articulation principles stipulating that all New Jersey college students who complete an associate degree and meet the established institutional requirements used to allow native students to achieve junior status shall not be denied transfer to a New Jersey senior college or university, unless there is insufficient capacity. So far, 40 institutions have formally adopted the principles. The Presidents' Council and the Commission on Higher Education also recommended that the state provide funding for the development and implementation costs of a comput-

erized articulation system called ARTSYS, which enables students to determine which courses will transfer for credit and enables colleges to review transcripts electronically.

Accelerated Student Learning

Original Recommendations: Colleges and universities should ensure that required courses are available for students to complete degrees in a timely manner, that students are accurately counseled regarding degree requirements, and that there are opportunities for students to acquire credits for graduation by examination.

Institutions should review degree requirements and courses for redundancies in an effort to shorten time to degree.

State Response: *The Governor's performance funding initiative rewards public institutions for achieving or moving toward an established benchmark for time to completion of degrees.*

Institutional Response: *Nearly all of the institutions responding to the survey indicate that they review course availability at least annually to ensure that the required courses are available for students to graduate within the "catalog time" for each degree program. Over 90 percent have taken steps to improve the accuracy and thoroughness of counseling regarding program requirements, and over two-thirds inform students of opportunities to acquire credits by examination.*

Over three-fourths of the institutions responding have reviewed courses and degree requirements to eliminate redundancies.

Original Recommendation: Colleges and universities should increase opportunities for high school students to take college-level courses and to acquire college credit, and students should be encouraged to do so. The potential of technology for delivering courses to high school students should be aggressively explored.

State Response: *The Commission surveyed New Jersey college and university presidents in December 1996 requesting information on the availability of courses to high school students. The survey indicated that many institutions are already responding to this recommendation, albeit on a limited scale. Many report expanding their use of interactive television to reach more high schools and more students. In an effort to promote more systemic collaboration between high schools and colleges and expand opportunities for high school students to pursue college-level studies, the State Department of Education included in a comprehensive reform proposal a requirement that local boards of education develop articulation agreements with New Jersey colleges and universities to facilitate dual credit arrangements. The State Board of Education began discussion of the proposed regulations in May 1999, and adoption is scheduled for early in the year 2000.*

NEW RECOMMENDATION: Consistent with statutory requirements, the Commission on Higher Education and Presidents' Council should work closely with the Department of Education to promote increased cooperation between the state's high schools and institutions of higher education. Both entities should be actively involved in the review of proposed requirements to develop and implement a model articulation agreement that encourages and facilitates dual credit arrangements.

CRITICAL ISSUE TWO: EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE TRAINING

Foundations for an Educated Populace: K-12 Education

Original Recommendation: Collaboration between the K-12 and higher education communities should be enhanced. The Commission on Higher Education should work with the Department of Education, and higher education institutions should work with K-12 districts/schools, to focus on raising expectations and student achievement and to ensure simultaneous renewal of teacher training programs, professional development, curricula, and instructional practices. Early childhood and parenting education also should be a priority for collaborative efforts.

State Response: *The Commission on Higher Education and the Department of Education developed a joint report and recommendations regarding community college and county vocational school collaboration; all counties have implemented the recommendations. A joint task force was formed in July 1998 to study the issue of high school to college transition; it is expected to make final recommendations by July 1999.*

Institutional Response: *Colleges and universities continue to have numerous linkages with K-12 schools, many of which are focused on key areas such as student achievement and teacher preparation and professional development. In addition, 15 institutions participate in the statewide College Bound Grant Program, which provides precollege educational enrichment activities to over 2,400 students in grades 6-12.*

Original Recommendation: Higher education institutions should continue to make reform of teacher education and professional development a priority.

State Response: *The State Board of Education established professional development requirements under which each licensed New Jersey teacher must complete 100 clock hours of state-approved continuing professional development and/or inservice programs every five years. Colleges and universities are expected to play a significant role in providing the required professional development activities. A Professional Standards Board that will help to ensure the quality and relevance of the required continuing education experiences*

includes higher education representatives. In addition, Commission staff will assist the Department of Education in the development of new regulations regarding teacher education programs and licensure and will work with department staff on three proposed programs focused on teacher quality.

NEW RECOMMENDATION: College and university presidents should play a leadership role in making reform of teacher education and professional development an institutional priority. They should involve the broad university community in the effort to increase the rigor of teacher preparation programs, particularly the arts and sciences faculty, given the significant role these disciplines have in preparing individuals to enter the teaching profession.

Undergraduate Education

Original Recommendation: Colleges and universities and their boards of trustees should improve undergraduate education by preparing students broadly for life's challenges.

Institutional Response: The 1998 survey found that institutions commonly gather information on student preparedness to determine their effectiveness in readying students for the personal and professional challenges they will face after graduation. Ability to communicate is the most widely monitored, followed by ability to think critically and ability to use technology effectively. Most institutions also gather information regarding the preparedness of undergraduates to understand various perspectives and to act independently.

Original Recommendation: Institutions should continue research and scholarship on teaching and learning to enhance undergraduate programs and increase sound practices.

Institutional Response: Every institution that responded to the survey provides at least one form of support to help increase research and scholarship on teaching and learning to enhance undergraduate programs and increase sound practices. Practices include faculty release time, funds for conference/seminar travel, support for pursuit of outside grants, faculty learning centers, and joint research projects with undergraduate students.

Original Recommendation: Each institutional board of trustees should examine the undergraduate advising process to address students' developmental needs, providing opportunities for out-of-class contact between students and faculty and personalized guidance for negotiating a new and complex culture, achieving self-understanding, and planning one's future course of action.

Institutional Response: According to the survey, nearly all institutions provide counseling and advisement services to address all or most of these needs. Over 90 percent offer counseling for students' developmental needs, as well as guidance to help students achieve

self-understanding and plan their futures. Over three-fourths of the institutions provide formal opportunities for out-of-class contact with faculty and personalized guidance to help students adjust to college and negotiate the college culture.

Graduate Education

Original Recommendation: New postbaccalaureate offerings, particularly doctoral and first-professional degree programs, should be undertaken only after careful consideration by boards of trustees (and the Presidents' Council and Commission where appropriate) of the resources required to ensure high quality, and only when a demonstrated need exists. Before adding graduate degrees, institutions should examine opportunities for collaboration/cooperation.

Institutional Response: According to the 1998 survey, 77 new postbaccalaureate programs were established by senior public and independent institutions between the spring of 1996 and the spring of 1998 (after consideration by the appropriate entities). Of these, institutions report that about one-quarter were established collaboratively with one or more other institutions. Institutions cited a variety of impediments to establishing collaborative programs including differing institutional missions and cultures, different curriculum requirements, student desire for geographic proximity, and the differences between public and private college tuition.

Research and Scholarship

Original Recommendation: Institutional boards of trustees should develop a system of reward that is consistent with a broad understanding of scholarship. This includes the integration, application, and teaching of knowledge as well as a broad array of faculty research activities including publication on the Internet as well as in traditional scholarly journals, and other forms of intellectual capital development such as patented inventions and processes and artistic works and performances.

Institutional Response: The majority of institutions report that their faculty reward systems promote teaching as a scholarly enterprise. Over 80 percent formally recognize the teaching and integration of knowledge in their faculty reward systems. Close to half formally recognize the application of knowledge by having students test research findings.

Faculty

New Jersey's vision for higher education recognizes that highly qualified faculty are a requisite for excellence in colleges and universities. Key stakeholders, ranging from students to corporate and government leaders, confirm that fact. Achieving that requisite for excellence calls for institutional attention to three areas: faculty development, faculty recruitment, and preparation of the next generation of faculty.

NEW RECOMMENDATIONS: Institutions should recognize the need for faculty development and support opportunities to enhance the quality of their faculty. The future calls for a faculty that demonstrates a predisposition to embrace change and to teach others to do so; a faculty that is proficient in using technology to enrich teaching and learning; a faculty that is globally oriented; and a faculty that is prepared to undertake the challenges that lie ahead.

Institutions that wish to be recognized as among the best should identify the particular area or areas in which they wish to excel and further develop or seek out faculty members who are regionally, nationally, or internationally renowned for their work in those disciplines.

As teaching positions are created or turn over due to retirement, resignation, or non-renewal, institutions should maximize opportunities to revitalize their faculties and place even greater emphasis on student-centered instruction. As employment opportunities increase, colleges and universities should begin to nurture promising graduate students, particularly minority students, with the interest and potential to pursue doctoral training and academic careers.

Continuing Education

Original Recommendation: Recognizing the importance of lifelong learning and continuous training and retraining throughout one's career, institutions and the state should emphasize flexible scheduling of classes and student services, as well as opportunities for distance learning at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

State Response: *In January 1999 Governor Whitman announced the creation of the New Jersey Virtual University to provide convenient access to information about distance learning opportunities offered by New Jersey colleges and universities. The initiative will also support faculty training and course conversion to increase the quality and number of programs and courses offered through technology-mediated instruction.*

Institutional Response: *Over half of the institutions responding to the 1998 survey indicate that they have enhanced the availability of evening and weekend classes and services, and over 90 percent now offer this sort of flexible scheduling. In addition, two-thirds reported increasing the availability of alternative instructional delivery modes such as distance education, and nearly all offer such options to students. There are currently over 800 distance learning courses and programs at 42 New Jersey colleges and universities, and four additional institutions plan to join the virtual university in the near future. The number of offerings will continue to expand in the future.*

Original Recommendation: To better meet the state's needs for entry-level workers, higher education institutions should increase their focus on the skills and personal qualities most valued by employers and should enhance opportunities for experience-based learning such as internships.

***Institutional Response:** Over 90 percent of the institutions responding to the survey indicate that they offer experience-based learning opportunities, and half of them indicate that they have enhanced these opportunities in the two years preceding the survey.*

Original Recommendation: The Commission on Higher Education and institutions should provide more information to employers about how higher education can address their needs and should seek opportunities for employers to assist faculty in designing programs and curricula that are responsive to their needs. Additionally, institutions should explore whether employers need student information beyond the college transcript.

***State Response:** In an effort to improve connections and communications with employers, the Commission and Presidents' Council, in conjunction with the state Chamber of Commerce and NJ Business and Industry Association, sponsored a seminar in October 1997 highlighting linkages between business and higher education. In addition, the Commission on Higher Education worked with Prosperity New Jersey and the Commission on Commerce and Economic Development to develop the online Business Resource Center (www.njbrc.com) that makes a comprehensive database available to current and potential New Jersey employers, including detailed information about available higher education opportunities in the state and the number of graduates in key fields.*

***Institutional Response:** Over one-third of the institutions responding to the survey have received formal input from employers regarding their need for more information about students and course content that they receive from a transcript.*

Meeting Workforce Needs

Original Recommendations: Institutional boards of trustees should evaluate current and proposed degree and certificate programs, including graduate and professional degree programs, in relation to projected labor demands and regional needs. Programs should be phased out when appropriate, and new programs should be established only when program quality and student demand or the need for graduates are demonstrated.

***Institutional Response:** All institutions report that they evaluate their program offerings on a regular basis. Almost half of those responding to the survey indicate that they do so annually, and the rest do so within a two- to five-year time frame.*

Original Recommendations: The Commission should regularly review and report on state and national information on occupational demand and supply to inform long-range planning.

Institutions that deliver workforce preparation should ensure that courses meet employer needs. As new processes and technologies are adopted by New Jersey businesses, institutions should develop courses to train technicians to operate, troubleshoot, and maintain the new technologies.

State Response: *The Commission's 1998 report on higher education capacity examined occupational supply and demand. It identified computer science as the sole area where the number of degrees granted statewide is currently insufficient to meet projected demands in related occupational fields. A review of more recent data shows a significant increase in the number of baccalaureate computer science degrees since the original 1996 assessment, while newer labor demand projections indicate that the need for computer engineers and systems analysts will continue to accelerate in the future.*

The Commission and individual colleges and universities are also planning for the projected need for additional school teachers to replace the significant number of teachers expected to retire over the next five to ten years, to meet the projected increase in the number of school-aged children, and to meet the need for certified preschool teachers to implement the Supreme Court mandate for programs for three- and four-year-old children in low wealth communities.

Institutional Response: *Over 85 percent of the institutions responding to the survey indicate that they receive formal input from employers regarding the need for new types of training to prepare for changing technologies. Over 75 percent have developed courses to meet employers needs for technicians, and several others plan to develop such programs or courses in the future.*

Graduation and Transfer Rates

Original Recommendation: **The Commission and Presidents' Council should establish a committee to recommend an incentive funding program that focuses on improved graduation and transfer rates for low-income or minority students.**

State Response: *In response to recommendations made by the committee and adopted by the Commission, the FY 98 budget included \$1 million for incentive grants for institutions to improve transfer and graduation rates for minority or low-income students. The Commission on Higher Education awarded 10 incentive grants in July 1997. A comprehensive evaluation of the grant program is underway.*

In addition, the Governor's performance funding initiative increases the focus on student outcomes by rewarding public institutions that achieve or move toward the graduation and transfer benchmarks established for each sector.

Serving Educationally and Economically Disadvantaged Students

Original Recommendations: The EOF Board of Directors should develop a clearly articulated mission statement and a five-year strategic plan.

Each participating college and university, within its distinct mission, should embrace and enhance the EOF program as an integral part of the institution, providing sufficient institutional resources to complement state funds.

The Commission should establish stronger linkages between EOF and federal and state-funded precollege efforts such as Upward Bound and College Bound.

State Response: *In response to these recommendations, the EOF Board of Directors undertook a long-range planning process that culminated in the adoption of a report, Opportunity For a New Millennium, that articulates the vision, mission, strategic goals, and accountability recommendations for EOF.*

The Commission and EOF staff coordinated the development of a federal GEAR UP grant (building on several existing College Bound programs) to support additional efforts to heighten low-income students' awareness of and preparation for college.

Institutional Response: *Collectively, the resources allocated to EOF by the 41 participating institutions exceed the required match of state funds.*

Support for Students with Limited English Proficiency

Original Recommendations: Institutions should consider the growing language minority student population, and successful approaches to assessment and instruction should be shared and replicated as appropriate.

The Commission on Higher Education should work closely with the Council on the Education of Language Minority Students (CELMS) to develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to state higher education policy for language minority student programs that will efficiently and effectively meet the needs of the ESL student population.

State Response: *The Commission implemented a number of recommendations stemming from an evaluation of the Education of Language Minority (ELMS) grant program in fall 1997 including a restructuring of the CELMS, development of a new request for proposal for two-year institutional grants, and a conference to increase ESL instructors' awareness of best practices.*

NEW RECOMMENDATION: A growing number of language minority students are enrolling in New Jersey colleges and universities. Integrating these students into the state's higher education system is imperative, not only to help them succeed academically and economically, but also to strengthen the state's workforce. Successful integration will require increased state support for programs that improve educational access for students who are non-native speakers of English.

Literacy and Remediation

Original Recommendation: The Commission on Higher Education in partnership with the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) should make recommendations to im

Urban Revitalization

Original Recommendation: Urban revitalization should be a priority for higher education, and state incentive funding should be provided to encourage increased collaboration among institutions and private enterprise for this purpose.

State Response: *The Commission's recommendation for urban revitalization incentive planning grants were funded in FY 1999; all eight eligible locales received at least one planning grant. Plans for implementation funding are under development in collaboration with the state's Urban Coordinating Council.*

<p style="text-align: center;">CRITICAL ISSUE FOUR: COMMUNITY AND CIVIC COMMITMENT</p>

Diversity

Original Recommendation: Recognizing the increasing diversity of New Jersey's population, institutions should strengthen programs and initiatives that enhance recruitment, retention, and advancement of minority students, faculty, staff, and administrators, thereby fostering diversity on campus.

State Response: *Both the Commission on Higher Education and the Presidents' Council have, through resolutions, publicly affirmed their belief that diversity is a strength of the state's higher education system and should be cultivated. The national climate regarding affirmative action has changed as recent court decisions and initiatives elsewhere have overturned the longstanding practice of using race and ethnicity as a factor in admissions decisions. In New Jersey, admissions policies are determined by each individual college and university, and there have been no legal challenges to institutional practices in this regard.*

While admissions and faculty decisions are largely institutional responsibilities, the Commission has a strong commitment to statewide programs that enhance the recruitment, retention, and advancement of minority students, faculty, staff, and administrators including the EOF programs, the Minority Academic Careers program, the College Bound program, and the Education of Language Minority Students grant program.

Institutional Response: *Roughly 90 percent of the institutions responding to the 1998 survey have formal programs for the recruitment, retention, and graduation of minority students; about half of them indicate that such programs have been enhanced during the past two years. Over 85 percent also have formal programs on campus for hiring and advancement of minority faculty, staff, and administrators; half of them have enhanced such programs over the past two years.*

Original recommendation: Campus administrators, faculty members, and boards of trustees should provide strong leadership, both on campus and in the larger community, in an effort to foster a spirit of civility and respect between genders and among religious, racial, ethnic, and language groups. Institutions should stress knowledge and appreciation of diverse cultures as a value and offer academic programs and student services that invite students (at all levels) onto their campuses to celebrate the richness of various cultures.

***Institutional Response:** Over 90 percent of the institutions responding to the survey indicate that they have formal programs to enhance knowledge of diverse cultures; well over half indicated that they had enhanced such programs over the past two years. About 90 percent also have formal programs to foster civility among diverse groups, and half of them had enhanced such programs over the past two years.*

Addressing the State's Societal Needs

Original Recommendation: The Presidents' Council should appoint a task force composed of community leaders and college and university faculty and staff to identify specific research, scholarship, and public service efforts that could be undertaken by higher education institutions to make substantial contributions to the societal needs of the state.

***State Response:** No action has been taken.*

Institutions are called on increasingly to devote knowledge and expertise to community problems. Partnerships between institutions and the community have the potential to serve society, as well as the specific college or university involved.

Over the last decade, many higher education institutions have implemented new service learning programs for their students. Service learning programs usually involve students in organized community service to meet societal needs. The most effective programs integrate community service with academic instruction, expanding student skills in critical, reflective thinking and developing an understanding of civic responsibility. These programs have been recognized for the benefits they provide to faculty, students, and the community.

NEW RECOMMENDATION: Institutional presidents and boards of trustees are encouraged to weave public service into their research and teaching activities. They should examine the range of options available for service learning and develop and implement programs appropriate for their mission, student population, faculty, and community.

Original Recommendation: As a service to the community and a demonstration of the value of higher education, institutional cultural events and resources should be available to the public when possible.

Institutional Response: About half of the institutions responding to the survey indicate that they make cultural events and resources available to the public most of the time; about a third do so all of the time and a small number do so infrequently or not at all.

CRITICAL ISSUE FIVE: THE ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Preservation

Original Recommendation: Higher education institutions should encourage a comprehensive approach to environmental education and provide strong leadership on campus regarding environmental preservation.

Institutional Response: Almost half of the institutions responding to the 1998 survey indicate that they provide environmental education as part of their general education competencies. About one-fourth overall formally encourage a comprehensive approach to environmental education. Over half of the institutions indicate that they provide strong leadership on campus and within the community regarding the protection of natural resources.

Developing Environmental Talent

Original Recommendation: Selected institutions should develop a special focus on environmental issues, training persons who can help to resolve environmental problems characterized by complex scientific, political, and economic issues.

Institutional Response: One-third of the institutions responding to the survey, representing all sectors of the system, indicate that they train individuals to deal with environmental issues facing the global society.

CRITICAL ISSUE SIX: HEALTH & HEALTH CARE

Medical and Allied Health Programs

Original Recommendations: The state should reduce the overall number of medical residents, increase the percent of residency positions filled by U.S. medical graduates, and achieve an appropriate balance between primary and specialty care. Teaching hospitals should reduce reliance on medical residents as low-cost providers and seek other ways to provide cost-effective services.

Institutional Response: Recent data indicate that New Jersey now falls below the national average and below neighboring states in the number of medical residents per 100,000 population. With 57 percent of residency positions in primary care disciplines, the state now

has the desired balance between primary and specialty care residencies. The percentage of international medical graduates in New Jersey residencies has been declining each year since 1995, although it does remain far above the national average.

Institutions should reexamine and prioritize instructional health care programs and continue coordination with other institutions to ensure that programs are cost-effective and that offerings address the state's health care needs. Preparation of students should emphasize primary care and allied health programs such as nurse practitioner and physician assistant.

***Institutional Response:** Almost all of the institutions responding to the survey that offer allied health programs indicate that they are coordinated with other institutions to ensure that the programs are cost-effective and that they address New Jersey's health care needs. Over two-thirds of the responding institutions that offer allied health programs indicate that they emphasize primary care health programs.*

Preventive Health Care

Original Recommendation: Recognizing the evolving focus on health and wellness promotion, selected institutions should provide cross-disciplinary training in education, social work, and health care to a cadre of persons who can work with traditional providers to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of the system.

***Institutional Response:** While no institutions report developing new cross-disciplinary programs in response to the recommendation, existing baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral programs in public health emphasize health promotion and disease prevention. The state's health sciences university is expanding its public health programs statewide, coordinating them under the umbrella of a new university-wide School of Public Health.*

Substance Abuse Prevention

Original Recommendation: Institutions should enhance efforts to empower young adults to establish healthy lifestyles as responsible and contributing adults in their communities without the misuse of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs.

***Institutional Response:** About 90 percent of the institutions responding to the 1998 survey offer formal programs to address the abuse of alcohol and drugs. Almost two-thirds offer a formal program to address the misuse of tobacco.*

Cultural Competency

The influx of new residents into New Jersey from different countries and cultures presents challenges to health care professionals striving to meet their needs. In addition, there is evidence that cultural considerations are related to the disparities in health status documented between minority and white residents of New Jersey and the nation as a whole. A growing body of literature docu-

ments the importance of ongoing efforts by medical professionals to increase their understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and develop the skills needed to work effectively with diverse populations.

NEW RECOMMENDATION: Recognizing the increasing diversity of New Jersey's population, and recognizing the disparity in health status between certain minority groups, institutions are encouraged to include cultural competency training as part of the curriculum for health professions, including

stitutions was increased by \$1 million annually in FY 1999 and FY 2000, larger annual increases are necessary to move the independent institutions to the statutory funding level.

NEW RECOMMENDATION: Access and affordability are directly affected by the amount of operating aid provided for institutions. The funding partnership for operating aid and a commitment to the Independent College and University Assistance Act should continue to be a priority. In addition, it is essential that county governments maintain their support of community colleges as state funding for the sector is increased.

State Student Assistance Funding

Original Recommendation: State support for student assistance programs should be continued for full-time, undergraduate students to maintain affordability, access, and choice, and assistance for part-time students should be explored. Annual state appropriations for the state's primary financial assistance programs, Tuition Aid Grants and the Educational Opportunity Fund program, should recognize annual increases in tuition, required fees, and other costs, and the respective policy boards should strive to contain costs while achieving desired outcomes.

State Response: *Although funding for Tuition Aid Grants has increased annually, enabling the state to increase both the number of students receiving TAG awards and the amount of each grant, these increases have not been sufficient to cover annual tuition increases. The Commission on Higher Education and Presidents' Council both recommended providing new funding for part-time TAG in their budget policy statements for the 1999 and 2000 fiscal years. The former Student Assistance Board also supported the concept of part-time TAG, although it did not recommend funding for FY 2000. Legislation to extend TAG to part-time students was introduced. Educational Opportunity Fund student grants have not increased since FY 1996.*

NEW RECOMMENDATION: The state should continue its commitment to need-based aid, increasing the Tuition Aid Grant program for full-time students to maximum current year levels, and extending TAG to the most economically disadvantaged part-time students, without limiting funds for those who attend full time.

Facilities

Original Recommendation: The state should implement the Commission on Higher Education's recommendations for a five-year facility renewal program for the senior public institutions and an increase in the state bond authorization level for the community college Chapter 12 program.

State Response: Legislation enacted in January 1998 increased the bond authorization level for the community college Chapter 12 program from \$160 million to \$280 million. In December 1998, Governor Whitman proposed a \$550 million bond fund to address the maintenance and renewal needs of senior institutions, both public and independent.

The Commission's recent report on college and university facilities estimates a need for \$3.2 billion over the next seven years. New construction needs total over \$2 billion, comprising at least 60 percent of the need in each sector. Deferred maintenance, which includes postponed renewal and replacement projects as well as unscheduled major maintenance, represents 18.5 percent of total capital needs (\$581 million dollars). The level of facility needs varies by sector and individual institution.

NEW RECOMMENDATION: The Presidents' Council and Commission should develop a long-term strategic plan to address facility needs identified in the 1999 report, *New Jersey's Capital Investment in Higher Education*.

Mission Differentiation, Program Development, and Collaboration

All New Jersey higher education institutions share a systemwide mission, while there is mission differentiation among the various types of institutions. Select institutional missions in New Jersey are defined by the college or university board of trustees within the framework of the various missions summarized below.

System Mission

It is the systemwide mission of all colleges and universities in New Jersey to cultivate, nurture, and disseminate knowledge. This charge includes the development of human intellectual resources, the extension and application of knowledge beyond campus boundaries, and the utilization of knowledge in the service of New Jersey's citizens and their economy. All institutions of higher education promote the public interest by collectively providing a system that empowers students, regardless of background, age, or socioeconomic status, to participate in the quest for knowledge and intellectual growth.

Research University Mission

Research universities may offer academic programs at the associate, baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels, as well as programs leading to advanced or post-baccalaureate professional degrees. The defining characteristic of the research university is the Ph.D. degree. The criteria for promotion and tenure at research universities place relatively heavier emphasis on a faculty member's record of research, including publications in refereed journals and published books as well as other forms of intellectual capital such as patented inventions. Its faculty generates a relatively higher level of federal research funding. Its faculty members tend to integrate what they have learned from their own research into the material presented in undergraduate courses, and they routinely expect each graduate student to initiate or participate in a substantial research program. The state's designated land grant institution is Rutgers University.

Comprehensive College and University Mission

These institutions may offer programs at the associate, baccalaureate, and master's level, except where limited by an institution's designated programmatic mission. Some of these comprehensive institutions may also be authorized to offer selected professional doctoral degrees. The criteria for promotion and tenure at comprehensive colleges and universities place relatively heavier emphasis on a faculty member's record of excellence in teaching. The faculty at these institutions are engaged primarily in applied research, although some do conduct traditional research.

Pre-baccalaureate Institution Mission

Institutions in this category award only the associate's degree and certificates unless granted permission to exceed their mission to grant the baccalaureate degree. The pre-baccalaureate institutions provide students with the opportunity to obtain the Associate in Arts (A.A.), Associate in Science (A.S.), Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.), Associate in Fine Arts (A.F.A) degrees or specialized academic diplomas or certificates. The A.A. and A.S. programs are transfer-oriented; the A.A.S. programs generally emphasize career preparation. Through their credit and non-credit offerings, these institutions play a major role in workforce development.

Specialized Institution Mission

Some institutions are authorized to offer certificates and degrees at specified levels in specialized fields such as Rabbinic and Talmudic Studies and Theological Studies.

Original Recommendation: In order to utilize limited state funding most effectively, expansion of institutional missions beyond their current scope should be considered only in the context of demonstrated statewide needs, as well as program and institutional quality. Institutions should offer new programs based on demonstrated need, and they should eliminate mediocre programs or programs of low priority as a means of internally reallocating resources to programs of high quality and priority. Expansion of programs should not erode the quality of ongoing programs.

State Response: *The Presidents' Council's new program review process requires institutions to justify need by assessing both labor market and student demand. The Commission on Higher Education, which has approved one mission expansion and 11 programs that exceed institutional mission, considers statewide needs, as well as program quality, in weighing such requests.*

Institutional Response: *Between July 1994 and July 1998, the 49 public and independent institutions subject to state program review implemented 192 new programs. During that same time period, a total of 288 degree programs were reported as discontinued. While the viability of most of the latter programs had diminished over many years, they were not officially eliminated until the Commission undertook a comprehensive review of program offerings in 1998.*

While the program review process has been working effectively to allow institutions to meet program demand more expeditiously, concerns regarding the statewide coordination of academic programming and mission expansion were identified in a 1998 survey and at the January 1999 Restructuring Assessment Conference as an area in need of improvement.

NEW RECOMMENDATION: THE Presidents' Council should consider developing qualitative criteria to guide boards of trustees and institutions under their authority when proposing new programs. The Presidents' Council should

Original Recommendation: Institutions of different types and from different sectors and locations should be alert to opportunities for partnerships, resource sharing, and coordination in program development and delivery.

Institutional Response: Colleges and universities in all sectors report that they are engaged in numerous collaborative efforts with other institutions and with K-12 schools for program delivery, resource sharing, research, and public service initiatives.

Accountability

Original Recommendations: As part of their continual effort to strive for excellence, effectiveness, and efficiency, institutions should increase their use of performance indicators as measures of progress toward institutionally defined goals, consistent with their mission as well as state needs. These goals should be related to benchmarks defined as the best outcomes of similar institutions both within and outside of the state.

Enhanced cost accounting and outcome data should be included in annual accountability reports and should inform statewide planning and budget decisions.

State Response: The Commission's annual systemwide accountability reports for 1997 and 1998 provided extensive cost and outcome data that help to inform statewide planning and budget decisions, and future reports will strive to analyze the complex link between institutional expenditures and higher education outcomes. In addition, the Governor's performance funding initiative enhances accountability for public institutions by tying funding (one percent of operating aid) to institutional performance in four key areas: graduation, transfer/articulation, institutional efficiency, and diversification of institutional revenues. Funding is provided based on each individual institution's progress in achieving or maintaining established benchmarks.

NEW RECOMMENDATION: Performance funding should be continued as both an accountability mechanism and an incentive to meet state goals. Benchmarks and indicators should be reviewed and refined annually, in consultation with the institutions.

Technology

Original Recommendations: The Commission on Higher Education should make recommendations regarding higher education technology infrastructure, distance learning, funding for recurring technology costs, and other related issues.

The Presidents' Council should develop a plan for regional centers for the higher-order preparation of faculty in the use of technology.

State Response: *Based upon the Commission's recommendations, the state created a \$55 million Higher Education Technology Infrastructure Fund. As of March 1999, the Commission had approved proposals valued at over \$41 million from 41 of the 45 eligible institutions. The technology infrastructure fund is also supporting the Virtual Academic Library Environment (VALE), which gives institutions access to sophisticated databases, and the creation of a telecommunications network backbone linking the 45 eligible institutions. The New Jersey Virtual University, an online index that provides a central source of information about over 800 distance learning courses and programs at 42 New Jersey colleges and universities, was established in January 1999. The Governor has proposed, as part of the initiative, \$500,000 for faculty development activities that will enhance instructional design and maximize the potential of technology to enrich the academic experience. This funding will also enable institutions to acquire the tools and expertise needed to develop and deliver interactive courses over the Internet.*

NEW RECOMMENDATION: Now that the state is well on its way to establishing a robust technology infrastructure that will strengthen the higher education system and improve efficiency and program effectiveness into the 21st century and beyond, institutions must ensure that their equipment and infrastructure remain current with emerging technology while focusing on maximizing its potential to enhance teaching and learning. This will require both an ongoing institutional commitment, as well as a stable source of state funding to help institutions address their recurring technology costs.

Advocacy and Excellence

Original Recommendation: The Commission on Higher Education and the Presidents' Council should develop a coordinated advocacy plan that communicates higher education's contributions to the state, demonstrating the benefits of long-term investments in higher education. The advocacy plan should include the development of a higher education coalition inclusive of the various supporters of higher education to assist in implementation of the plan.

State Response: *New Jersey's Plan for Higher Education* included over 50 recommendations. As a result of advocacy efforts, many of those recommendations have been fully or partially implemented in the two and one-half years since the adoption of the plan. State government and the higher education community collaborated to address several issues, including some of the essential conditions for achieving the vision. Individual colleges and universities have also made strides in implementing recommendations related specifically to their operations and programs.

All of the plan's recommendations are designed to realize the ideals identified in the higher education vision and characteristics of excellence. Continued diligence in implementing those recommendations is important. Equally important, however, is the general and ongoing need to better communicate higher education's fundamental value to society and the economic well being of the

state. Increased awareness of that value will develop the broader constituency and support necessary to maintain a high-quality higher education system for the future.

If New Jersey wishes to be considered among the best in the world in regard to higher education institutions, statewide strategies must be developed and implemented which support institutional excellence.

NEW RECOMMENDATIONS: The Commission on Higher Education, which is the entity that is statutorily charged with advocacy on behalf of higher education, should develop and initiate strategies to raise the level of awareness of higher education's societal and economic contributions and make the case for investment in higher education, which is a critical state resource.

In addition, the Commission should develop supplemental state funding strategies to assist colleges and universities in striving for greatness, recognizing that the development of excellence within institutions is the key to being among the best higher education systems in the world.

The Commission should seek assistance and advice from the higher education community, and from consultants if determined necessary, to better communicate the value and contributions of higher education and to develop strategies for excellence.

In addition, while it is not necessarily the role of trustees to serve as statewide spokespersons for higher education, they should play an increased role as advocates, primarily for their own institutions.

Governance

The statutorily required five-year assessment of higher education restructuring found that New Jersey's tripartite governance structure is working well, and has spurred institutional autonomy, collaboration, and innovation within a coordinated higher education system. Trustees play a key role in overseeing institutional matters and fulfilling the mission of each college and university; they also must strive to meet statewide goals in cooperation with other institutions and entities.

NEW RECOMMENDATION: The Commission should establish a task force that includes trustees to better define the role trustees should play and recommend mechanisms for involving them in statewide policy and planning efforts. At the same time, the trustee appointment process should be improved to ensure the timely appointment of highly qualified individuals, independent of political considerations.

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